

## Chapter 4: Management Direction

### Detroit Lakes Wetland Management District

This chapter of the Comprehensive Conservation Plan steps down overall guidance to the District through station specific objectives and strategies. The objectives and strategies are unique to the Detroit Lakes Wetland Management District and identify activities that achieve the Plan's goals, the District's purpose and the National Wildlife Refuge System mission (Chapters 1 and 2).

Detroit Lakes Wetland Management District is located in northwestern Minnesota and includes the counties of Becker, Clay, Mahnomen, Norman, and Polk. The headquarters is near Detroit Lakes, which is located in the southern portion of the District. The District is bordered on the west by the flat Red River Valley Flood Plain and by the rolling hardwood forest-lake region on the east. The primary economic base of the area is agriculture, with a strong tourism industry centered on area lakes.

The rolling prairie zone and associated wetlands of this District, located between glacial Lake Agassiz's beachline and the hardwood forest, have not been spared from agricultural development. The tallgrass prairie, most of the prairie wetlands, and much of the timberland have been converted to crop production.

The District currently manages 41,615 fee acres on 163 Waterfowl Production Areas, and 306 easements covering 11,960 acres. In addition, 14 Conservation Easements totaling 1,340 acres are administered by the District, covering restored wetlands and farmed lands on former Farmers Home Administration inventory property.

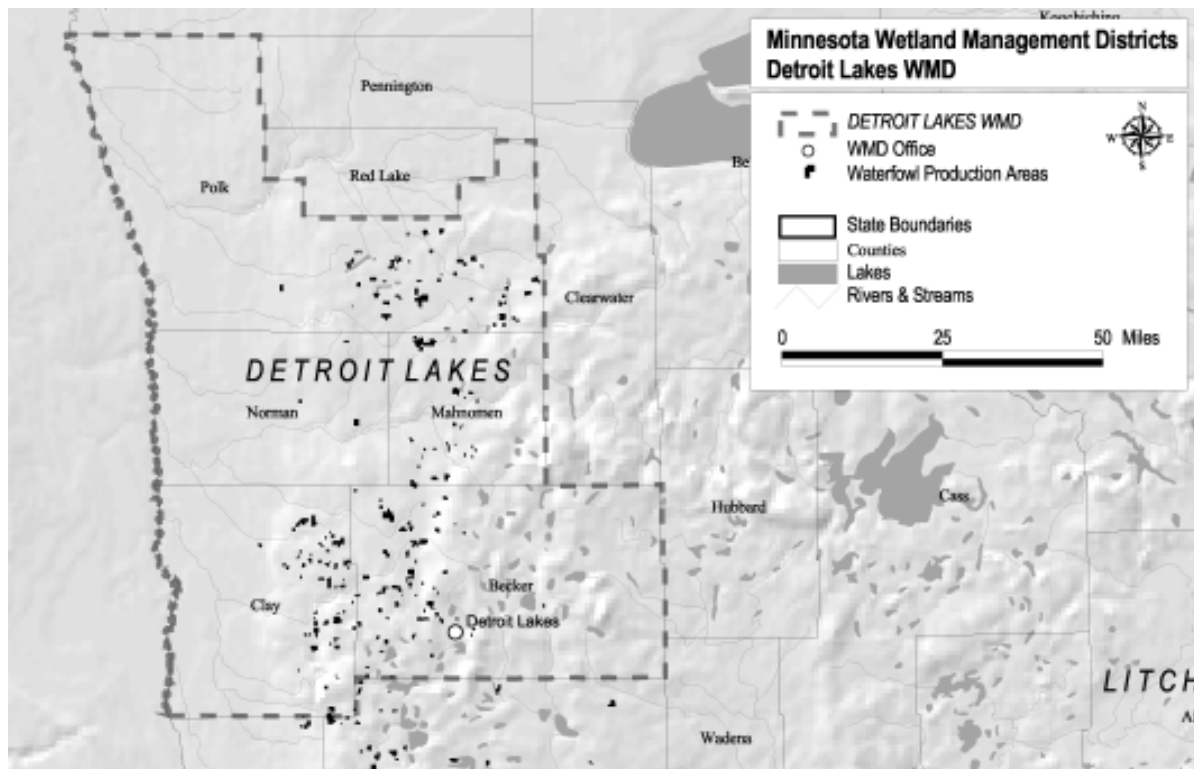


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#### Major Habitat Types of Waterfowl Production Areas in the Detroit Lakes Wetland Management District (in acres)

Native Prairie (virgin)	4,051
Other Grasslands/Farmland	15,262
Forested/Brushland	4,178
Wetland/Riverine	18,124
<i>Total:</i>	<i>41,615</i>

**Figure 10: Detroit Lakes Wetland Management District**



## Goals, Objectives and Strategies

### Wildlife and Habitat

#### Goal 1: Wildlife

Strive to preserve and maintain diversity and increase the abundance of waterfowl and other key wildlife species in the Northern Tallgrass Prairie Ecosystem. Seek sustainable solutions to the impact of Canada Geese on adjacent private croplands. Preserve, restore, and enhance resident wildlife populations where compatible with waterfowl and the preservation of other trust species.

**Objective 1.1:** Update MAAPE Process. The District will request that the Habitat and Population Evaluation Team (HAPET) review the Multi-agency Approach to Planning and Evaluation (MAAPE) process every 5 years to incorporate monitoring results and reevaluate strategies for increasing waterfowl production within the District.

*Strategy 1.1.1.:* Work with HAPET to complete new review in 2003.

**Objective 1.2:** Alternative Waterfowl Monitoring. The District will develop alternative monitoring techniques by the year 2004 for waterfowl abundance and productivity estimates in areas of the District that are not well covered by the Four-Square-Mile monitoring pro-

gram. These estimates should be developed in cooperation with the HAPET office since the current Four-Square-Mile data is used in the mallard model and are the basis of the MAAPE process.

*Strategy 1.2.1:* Set up a meeting with the Fergus Falls HAPET office by 2003 to develop potential for expanded monitoring into the eastern (wooded) portion of the District. Develop work plan and request funds for survey work.

**Objective 1.3:** Recruitment Rate. The District will strive to increase the potential recruitment rate for breeding pairs of ducks in an average year from the current level of 11.3 to 15.0 by the year 2010 (based on the Four-Square-Mile Survey Data).

*Strategy 1.3.1:* The District will strive to restore 8,000 acres of cropland to prairie grassland and wetlands on WPAs over the next 10 years.

*Strategy 1.3.2:* The District will strive to restore 2,000 acres of cropland to prairie grassland and wetlands on private lands over the next 10 years.

*Strategy 1.3.3:* Using Wildlife Management Areas, Scientific Natural Areas, The Nature Conservancy lands, and other conservation areas, strive to increase the effective habitat block size of WPAs to 1,000 acres.

*Strategy 1.3.4:* Develop and fund a comprehensive research project on the impacts of fish in small wetlands as related to invertebrate, and subsequent waterfowl production. Identify District WPAs that sustain problem fish populations, and implement management recommendations. The District will strive to exclude fish in all new wetland restorations, and eradicate/exclude fish in 10 percent of the existing WPA's sustaining undesirable fish populations annually.

*Strategy 1.3.5:* The District will maintain and monitor existing nest structures and work to increase nest structure numbers by 20 per year up to a total of 400 structures. The District will construct and supply an additional 50 structures per year for placement on private lands.

*Strategy 1.3.6:* Remove woody vegetation through burning, timber sales, and cutting coupled with herbicide application from 10 percent of the WPAs west of Highway 59 annually.

*Strategy 1.3.7:* Remove rock piles and other hostile waterfowl habitat throughout the District.

**Objective 1.8:** Violations. The District will inspect at least 70 percent of the WPAs, and all Conservation, Habitat, and Wetland Easements, for compliance to insure protection of habitat for migratory waterfowl and other wildlife. All illegal habitat activity will be addressed immediately and altered habitat will be restored as soon as possible.

*Strategy 1.8.1:* District management and volunteer staff will inspect District WPAs on a regular schedule. All easements will be aerially inspected twice annually.

*Strategy 1.8.2:* Hire a full-time law enforcement officer for the District.

**Objective 1.9:** Working With Partners. The District will cooperate with all USDA, Minnesota DNR, and any other local agency programs as well as participate as a partner with District conservation organizations to increase waterfowl habitat and production.

*Strategy 1.9.1:* Secure funding to support at least one cost-shared habitat restoration project annually. Strive to add at least one additional partner in each subsequent year.

*Strategy 1.9.2:* Seek opportunities to provide technical assistance to other agencies and partners regarding habitat and wildlife issues.

*Strategy 1.9.3:* Strive to identify and cultivate one new, “non-traditional” partnership annually.

**Objective 1.10:** Develop a Memorandum of Understanding with the Minnesota DNR that clearly articulates the responsibilities of Wetland Districts for responding to landowner complaints about damage by geese from WPA wetlands.

*Strategy 1.10.1:* Provide additional staff to employ deterrent techniques on WPAs that are generating problem goose situations.

*Strategy 1.10.2:* Re-direct nest basket efforts to favor duck production over Canada goose use through replacement or modification of baskets in problem generating areas.

*Strategy 1.10.3:* Assist Minnesota DNR in obtaining necessary information to manage resident goose populations by providing staffing to support goose banding efforts within the District.

*Strategy 1.10.4:* Work with Ducks Unlimited, the Minnesota Waterfowl Association, and local sportsman's groups to coordinate and execute the practice of planting alternate food crops/feeding areas on adjacent private land.

**Objective 1.11:** Enforcement. The Districts will prohibit the introduction of wildlife species that are not native to the Northern Tallgrass Prairie Ecosystem.

## Goal 2: Habitat

Restore native prairie plant communities of the Northern Tallgrass Prairie Ecosystem using local ecotypes of seed and maintain the vigor of these stands through natural processes. Restore functioning wetland complexes and maintain the cyclic productivity of wetlands. Continue efforts for long-term solutions to the problem of invasive species with increased emphasis on biological control to minimize damage to aquatic and terrestrial communities. Continue efforts to better define the role of each District in assisting private landowners with wetland, upland and riparian restorations.

**Objective 2.1:** Prairie Restoration. Restore an average of 800 acres of uplands on WPAs to native seeded grassland species each year. Begin the process on all new acquisitions within 3 years of purchase. Seed a diverse mix of native grasses and forbs using seed harvested from local native prairie or restored prairie. Replicate, to the extent possible, the structure, species composition, and processes of native ecological communities in the Tallgrass Prairie Ecosystem to improve migratory bird habitat and improve existing soil and water quality within respective watersheds. Our goal will be 50 species of prairie plants in the seed mix.

*Strategy 2.1.1:* Harvest, process, and store a minimum of 25,000 pounds of native prairie grass and forb seed from WPA and Minnesota State Wildlife Management Areas (WMA) for restoration work. Purchase seed of less common species when necessary.

*Strategy 2.1.2:* Use the most efficient and effective seeding techniques and site preparation, including drilling, broadcast seeding, and snow seeding. Continually look for innovative and effective seeding procedures.

*Strategy 2.1.3:* Limit the use of chemical weed control on newly seeded areas to maximize grass and forb species diversity. Use clipping and biological agents to control weeds to the extent possible.

*Strategy 2.1.4:* Expand seed harvest beyond the traditional fall harvest to include a greater diversity species.

*Strategy 2.1.5:* Secure funding to support ongoing research projects to bring to bear the best science on

prairie restoration. Variables for study include timing of harvest, seeding techniques, site preparation, and individual species abilities to colonize/compete, among others.

*Strategy 2.1.6:* Hire a botanist to devise scientifically acceptable methods to quantify prairie restorations.

**Objective 2.2:**

Grassland Management. Renovate and seed or inter-seed 200 acres of existing grassland annually to improve diversity and vigor.

*Strategy 2.2.1:* Utilize prescribed burning, grazing, and/or chemical treatments to prepare existing poor-quality grasslands for seeding.

**Objective 2.3:**

Prescribe Burn. Plan and conduct prescribed burns on 8,100 acres (20 percent of WPA acreage) annually to maintain and restore native prairie plant species to improve waterfowl and wildlife utilization, and to prepare selected sites for native seed harvest.

*Strategy 2.3.1:* Conduct prescribed burns on 30-40 units (both fee and habitat easements) totaling 7,000-9,000 acres per year.

*Strategy 2.3.2:* Continue to submit FIREBASE projects to ensure adequate funding to consistently field two burn crews during prime burning periods.

*Strategy 2.3.3:* Mimic natural burning periods by expanding current spring burning program to include summer and fall burning.

*Strategy 2.3.4:* Initiate monitoring program to evaluate and subsequently increase effectiveness of fire program in meeting management goals.

**Objective 2.4:**

Wildfire Management. Protect human life, property, natural/cultural resources, and real property both within and adjacent to Fish and Wildlife Service administered lands from those fires which start on FWS land by safely suppressing all wildland fires using strategies and tactics appropriate to safety considerations, values to be protected, management objectives and in accordance with Service Policy.

*Strategy 2.4.1:* Provide wildfire suppression training opportunities to local rural fire departments.

*Strategy 2.4.2:* Coordinate preparedness activities with Minnesota DNR Forestry Division, Bureau of Indian Affairs and local rural fire departments.

**Objective 2.5:**

Forest Management. Conduct forest management on the District to replicate, to the extent possible, the structure, species compo-



USFWS Photograph

sition, and processes of native ecological communities to improve migratory bird habitat and improve existing soil and water quality within respective watersheds.

*Strategy 2.5.1:* Utilize available surveys, soils information and historical data to determine the extent of forest and transition zone ecotypes within the district.

*Strategy 2.5.2:* Identify existing, degraded and/or lost acreages of oak savanna habitat within the District, and develop management plan for restoration.

**Objective 2.6:** Restoration. Restore an average of 100 wetlands per year both on and off District land to serve migratory birds as migration, breeding, and nesting habitat.

*Strategy 2.6.1:* Identify and prioritize list of remaining WPA wetland restorations to undertake as funding permits.

*Strategy 2.6.2:* Research the feasibility of transferring existing wetland substrate cores to new restorations to provide sources of both invertebrate and seed for re-establishment.

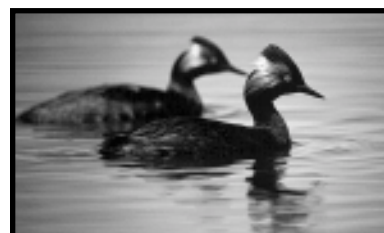


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*Strategy 2.6.3:* Purchase or hand harvest seed to augment establishment of wetland and wet prairie vegetation species in and adjacent to restoration areas.

**Objective 2.7:** Management. Manage water levels on 100 percent of the wetlands that have built-in water control structures to increase vegetation and nutrient recycling for the benefit of waterfowl.

*Strategy 2.7.1:* By 2004, develop a water management plan for all wetlands with water control capabilities. The plan will document desired water level elevations and draw down schedules as well as provide a plan for monitoring the effectiveness of management regimes.

**Objective 2.8:** Monitoring. Inventory and monitor hydrological systems in the District as identified in the water management plan, including chemical water analysis, water level, water flow, and the interaction of Federal lands and private lands within the watershed.

*Strategy 2.8.1:* By 2004, prepare a hydrological monitoring plan.

*Strategy 2.8.2:* Conduct regular surveys of water conditions and monitor the impacts on hydrology within the District as identified in the monitoring plan.

*Strategy 2.8.3:* Conduct water analysis to monitor changes in contaminants and other key chemicals over time as identified in the Hydrological Monitoring Plan.

*Strategy 2.8.4:* Annually inspect all water control structures and determine management needs to improve marsh productivity for breeding and brood rearing of migratory birds.

**Objective 2.9:** Plant Control. Reduce exotic and invasive plants, including noxious weeds on state and county lists through an aggressive program including burning, mowing, chemical treatment, hand cropping, and restoration seeding. Primary targets include purple loosestrife, Canada thistle, leafy spurge, and woody vegetation.

*Strategy 2.9.1:* Acquire the necessary equipment and supplies to annually conduct mechanical weed control on up to 750 acres.

*Strategy 2.9.2:* Contract or provide additional staff to cut and chemically treat invasive exotic woody vegetation (box elder, Siberian elm) on 400 acres of native grasslands on WPAs annually.

**Objective 2.10:** Minnow and Carp Control. Reduce or eliminate populations of exotic/invasive fish species on shallow prairie wetland communities within the District. Primary targets include fathead minnows, carp, and buffalo.

*Strategy 2.10.1:* Survey wetlands for potential fish populations. By 2004, develop a plan for the prioritized elimination of non-desirable fish in all wetlands.

*Strategy 2.10.2:* Ensure future wetland restorations account for, and where possible, limit potential for invasion by exotic fish species.

**Objective 2.11:** Grasshopper control. Conduct limited grasshopper control programs only as mandated by state law to protect infestation of adjacent private properties.

**Objective 2.12:** Biological Control. Increase emphasis on biological control whenever feasible. The District will continue to release beetles to control leafy spurge, purple loosestrife and spotted knapweed.

*Strategy 2.12.1:* Identify and prioritize WPAs that could benefit from expanded biological control efforts. Work with federal, state and local partners to integrate bio-control efforts.

*Strategy 2.12.2:* Identify WPAs that can serve as propagation sites for bio-control agents.

### Goal 3: Acquisition

Within current acquisition acreage goals, identify the highest priority acres for acquisition taking into account block size and waterfowl productivity data. These priority areas should drive acquisition efforts whenever possible. Service land acquisition should have no negative impact on net revenues to local government. Understand and communicate the economic effects of federal land ownership on local communities.

**Objective 3.1:** Evaluating Acquisition Priority. Review and update the current acquisition guidelines by the year 2003. Acquisition strategies for future acquisitions within the Districts will be based on site potential and consideration will be given to size, quality, key species affected, habitat fragmentation, landscape scale complexes, potential productivity of restored wetlands, etc. Managers will need to base acquisitions on biologically-based priorities, yet balance these priorities with the realities of those lands and waters available.

*Strategy 3.1.1:* Develop GIS layers containing all lands with conservation land-cover practices, both permanent (i.e WMAs) and temporary (CRP).

*Strategy 3.1.2:* Hire a wildlife biologist to conduct ongoing evaluations of private lands within the District including delineation of specific tracts for purchase or easement.

**Objective 3.2:** Goal Acres. Within 4 years conduct a biological assessment to determine if current goal acres will be sufficient to reach waterfowl recruitment objectives for the District lands.

*Strategy 3.2.1:* The wildlife biologist will work with HAPET to develop and conduct the assessment.

**Objective 3.3:** Coordination. The District will coordinate with the Fergus Falls Acquisition Office to ensure rapid response to willing seller offers that meet the acquisition priorities. An offer will be made to the seller within 6 months of the decision to acquire the tract.

*Strategy 3.3.1:* If interested in acquiring a tract, the District staff will notify the Fergus Falls Acquisition Office within 2 weeks of the initial land owner contact.

*Strategy 3.3.2:* The Acquisition Office will make contact with land owners and strive to provide an offer within 5 months of receiving the statement of interest from the District.

**Objective 3.4:** Acquisition. At the current ability of the Acquisition Office and District to complete acquisitions and restorations, the District will meet our current District goal acres within 48 years by acquiring an average of 1,000 acres in fee title, 100 acres of

wetland easements, and 50 acres of upland easements per year for waterfowl breeding and use. This objective will be modified as appropriate if the goal acres are modified or restoration funding changes.

*Strategy 3.4.1:* Identify 2,000 acres of land for potential fee and easement acquisition annually. The Fergus Falls Acquisition Office should complete acquisitions on an average of 1,000 acres of fee, 100 acres of wetland easements, and 50 acres of grassland easements annually.

*Strategy 3.4.2:* Initiate frequent coordination meetings with county commissioners in each of the five counties making up the District to discuss issues of mutual concern.

*Strategy 3.4.3:* Hire a full-time private lands biologist to cultivate landowner relationships and deliver existing government programs. (Same position as noted in Strategy 3.1.2.)

**Objective 3.5:** Advocate 100 percent of revenue sharing and a lump sum payment for past underpayment through a trust fund to the counties.

*Strategy 3.5.1:* Maintain communications with county commissioners so that accurate information is provided on a consistent basis regarding revenue sharing and payments in lieu of taxes.

**Objective 3.6:** Conduct a study that would provide the following information to managers so that they can better communicate the issues to the public:

- 1) A graph of revenue sharing for the last 20 years.
- 2) A detailed explanation of the impact of Federal ownership on school taxes.
- 3) A detailed study of the trust fund payments to the State in relation to the Revenue Sharing shortfall.
- 4) How much money do we really need to make up the trust fund from 1993 and prior?

*Strategy 3.6.1:* Contract a vendor to research and provide the information.

**Objective 3.7:** Determine local economic value of Federal land ownership.

*Strategy 3.7.1:* Contract with an economist to complete an economic analysis of the impacts of the Detroit Lakes Wetland Management District.

- Objective 3.8:** Demonstrate the hydrological benefits of restored wetlands; determine cash value of wetlands.
- Strategy 3.8.1:* Participate in Red River Basin study of wetland benefits.
- Objective 3.9:** Determine the social value of natural habitat in the landscape. Determine the importance of wildlife to people in a community.
- Strategy 3.9.1:* Contract with sociologist to conduct a study of public attitudes and values.

#### Goal 4: Monitoring

Collect baseline information on plants, fish and wildlife and monitor critical parameters and trends of key species and/or species groups on and around District units. Promote the use of coordinated, standardized, cost effective, and defensible methods for gathering and analyzing habitat and population data. Management decisions will be based on the resulting data.

- Objective 4.1:** Inventory and Monitoring Workshop: Conduct an inventory and monitoring workshop by 2003 with recognized researchers in the field to identify monitoring needs, approaches, strategies, and target species.
- Objective 4.2:** Inventory and Monitoring Plan. Develop an Inventory and Monitoring Plan by 2004 that will identify census needs and appropriate techniques as part of a coordinated monitoring program that will be used to evaluate species richness within the District by developing species data and accounts on selected sites.
- Objective 4.3:** Geographic Information System. Increase the use of GIS technology in monitoring habitat and wildlife (See operations section for details).
- Objective 4.4:** Increase the use of biological data in the overall management of the Districts by fulfilling the actions identified in the Inventory and Monitoring Plan and the following:
- Strategy 4.4.1:* Biologist. Hire a biologist, two full-time, and two seasonal technicians and purchase the necessary equipment for the District to conduct a biological monitoring program as identified in the Inventory and Monitoring Plan.
- Strategy 4.4.2:* Annual Meeting. Have annual meetings for biologists and field personnel to share information, techniques, and results of management strategies on target populations.
- Strategy 4.4.3:* Data Summaries. Summarize data concerning the impact of management strategies on target species and present to management so decisions can be based on monitoring information.



**Objective 4.5:** Biological Inventory. As part of the Inventory and Monitoring Plan, inventory the biological resources on the Districts by the year 2005.

*Strategy 4.5.1:* Hire a biologist, two full-time, and two seasonal technicians and purchase the necessary equipment for the District to conduct a comprehensive biological monitoring program as identified in the Inventory and Monitoring Plan. (Same positions as noted in Strategy 4.4.1.)

*Strategy 4.5.2:* Coordinate with peers and professionals in government, the private sector, and academia to improve the credibility of the Service's biological capabilities.

*Strategy 4.5.3:* Seek funding to support graduate level research projects within the District that focus on issues important to management of WPAs.

**Objective 4.6:** Breeding Birds. Conduct regular surveys of breeding grassland and wetland migratory birds. Include information on reproductive success as well as species abundance, using techniques that are outlined in the Inventory and Monitoring Plan.

**Objective 4.7:** Research. Encourage and cooperate in research that will further our understanding about management and habitat manipulations on the District.

*Strategy 4.7.1:* Work with local academia to identify and support graduate student research of mutual interest.

**Objectives 4.8:** Monitoring. Monitor the levels of external threats to the Waterfowl Production Areas such as soil erosion, incoming water quality, pesticide use, and contaminants as identified in the Inventory and Monitoring Plan.

#### Goal 5: Endangered Species / Unique Communities

Preserve enhance, and restore rare native northern tallgrass prairie, flora and fauna that are or may become endangered. Where feasible in both ecological and social/economic terms, reintroduce native species on WPAs in cooperation with the Minnesota DNR.

**Objective 5.1:** Threatened and Endangered Species. Identify and survey threatened and endangered species within the District looking specifically for species of special interest to the Service.

**Objective 5.2:** Invertebrates. Conduct surveys of invertebrate communities in grassland and wetland communities following the approaches identified in the Inventory and Monitoring Plan.

- Objective 5.3:** Partners for Fish and Wildlife. With the Partners for Fish and Wildlife staff in the Regional Office, develop clear guidance for upland and riparian restoration work on private lands so each District is managing the program consistently.
- Strategy 5.3.1:* Identify limiting factors in Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program and develop methods to prioritize and address them.
- Strategy 5.3.2:* Hire a Wildlife Biologist to coordinate and increase the station's ability to respond to natural resource technical assistance requests from private landowners. (Same position as noted in Strategy 3.1.2.)
- Strategy 5.3.3:* Expand the existing prescribed fire program to include quality tracts of private native grassland habitat. Seek Partners for Wildlife or other alternative money to fund program.
- Objective 5.4:** Inventory and Monitoring. The District will identify the location of endangered and threatened species within the District boundaries through the Inventory and Monitoring Plan. The Districts will obtain baseline data including maps of all federally endangered and threatened species by 2002.
- Strategy 5.4.1:* Coordinate with Minnesota DNR, County Biological Survey, and local universities for aid in documenting and locating known endangered and threatened species locations within the District.
- Strategy 5.4.2:* Make threatened and endangered species inventories a high priority within the District monitoring plan being developed.
- Objective 5.5:** Management. The District will protect, and enhance populations of endangered, threatened, and special emphasis species that are indigenous on District lands. Management actions applied to these areas will be tailored to meet species management needs.
- Strategy 5.5.1:* Examine habitat management practices and management unit block size for all units with threatened, endangered, and special emphasis species present.
- Objective 5.6:** Cooperation. The District will work with partners and other agencies to develop specific plans for target species occurring within the Districts.
- Strategy 5.6.1:* Develop special concern, multi-agency work groups to identify and promote management needs for special concern species.

- Objective 5.7:** Enforcement: The Districts will enforce all Endangered Species and Migratory Bird Treaty Act regulations within the District through increased contacts with hunters, neighbors, and visitors.
- Strategy 5.7.1:* Hire a full-time law enforcement officer. (Same position as Strategy 1.8.2).
- Objective 5.8:** Monitoring. The District will review baseline data including maps of all federally-listed endangered and threatened species as well as all native prairie tracts, calcareous fens, and oak savannah by 2005.
- Objective 5.9:** Cooperation. The District will identify threatened Northern Tallgrass Prairie unique communities and work through the Tall Grass Prairie Habitat Preservation Area project partners or other agencies and partners to acquire in fee title or protect through easement in cases where the Small Wetlands Acquisition Program is not appropriate. All remaining native prairie remnants within each District will be identified by 2005 and strategies for their protection will be developed by the year 2007.
- Strategy 5.9.1:* Continue to serve on multi-agency “scorecard team” that identifies prairie remnants, ranks them, and assigns a responsible partner action.
- Objective 5.10:** Identify, evaluate, and prioritize opportunities to reintroduce native species documenting the needs in a plan by 2005.
- Objective 5.11:** By 2010, begin a reintroduction program to reintroduce one species per year until all goal species identified under Objective 5.10 are reintroduced.

## **People**

### Goal 6: Public Use/ Environmental Education

Provide opportunities for the public to use the WPAs in a way that promotes understanding and appreciation of the Prairie Pothole Region. Promote greater understanding and awareness of the Wetland Management District’s programs, goals, and objectives. Advance stewardship and understanding of the Prairie Pothole Region through environmental education, outreach and partnership development.

- Objective 6.1:** The District will strive to meet the National Visitor Service Standards for the Refuge System by the year 2005.
- Strategy 6.1.1:* Hire a public use/outreach specialist for the District by 2003 to develop and administer the District Visitor Services Plan.
- Strategy 6.1.2:* Open the visitor contact station at the WPA at District Headquarters on weekends with volunteer and paid interpretive staff.

*Strategy 6.1.3:* Provide quality wildlife observation, photography, interpretation, parking facilities and other wildlife-related recreational and educational opportunities on selected District WPAs.

*Strategy 6.1.4:* *Complete the Prairie Marsh Interpretive Trail* on the District Headquarters WPA and surrounding public and private land by 2004.

*Strategy 6.1.5:* Increase quality hunting and trapping opportunities on WPAs through continued acquisition and suitable habitat management programs.

*Strategy 6.1.6:* Continue to build volunteer staff and solicit corporate and service organization partnerships to support District programs.



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**Objective 6.2:** The District should have a full-time public use/outreach specialist by the year 2002.

*Strategy 6.2.1:* Hire a full-time public use/outreach specialist to deliver Service programs. (Same position as noted in Strategy 6.1.1.)

**Objective 6.3:** Enhance the visiting public's experience, protect wildlife habitats from damage by users and designate at least one WPA in each county that will be fully accessible.

*Strategy 6.3.1:* By 2003, identify the WPAs and develop access points that will allow people with disabilities to have opportunities for hunting, wildlife observation, photography, interpretation, and other wildlife related recreational and educational activities.

*Strategy 6.3.2:* Work in partnership with organizations that assist people with disabilities to become independent enough to take advantage of outdoor recreational and educational opportunities, such as Options Resource Center for Independent Living.

*Strategy 6.3.3:* Contact potential corporate and service organization sponsors to provide specialized access equipment if necessary.

*Strategy 6.3.4:* Enlist a corps of volunteers to help people with disabilities take advantage of the recreational opportunities provided on WPAs.

- Objective 6.5:** Develop maps for each Wetland Management District that can be easily provided upon request by the public by the year 2002.
- Strategy 6.5.1:* Utilize GIS capabilities to generate maps.
- Objective 6.6:** Develop a public use/outreach plan for the District, following the Public Use Plan developed by Fergus Falls Wetland Management District. Address internal (within the Service) and external audiences by the year 2005.
- Strategy 6.6.1:* Public use/outreach specialist will develop a Public Use Management Plan for the District by 2004.
- Objective 6.7:** Promote greater understanding of the District program by implementing Public Use Plan over the next 10 years.
- Strategy 6.7.1:* Implement the Public Use/Outreach Plan by the year 2004.
- Strategy 6.7.2:* Communicate key issues with off-site audiences through radio, television, newspapers, and the Internet.
- Strategy 6.7.3:* Promote awareness of District and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service programs with on-site events such as National Wildlife Week, International Migratory Bird Day, Waterfowl Expo, guided tours, and other activities that promote public visits to District facilities.
- Strategy 6.7.4:* Promote awareness of District and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service programs and recreational activities with off-site displays at county fairs, sportsman's shows, and other public gatherings.
- Strategy 6.7.5:* Maintain a current and dynamic web page for the District.
- Objective 6.8:** Provide for 1,000 environmental education visits per year on the District by 2003.
- Strategy 6.8.1:* By 2004, public use/outreach specialist will develop and Environmental Education Plan for the District.
- Strategy 6.8.2:* By 2004, Public Use/Outreach Specialist will work with Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge, Hamden Slough National Wildlife Refuge, and Rydell National Wildlife Refuge to develop environmental education curriculum that teachers in the District could use to teach their students about environmental issues.

*Strategy 6.8.3:* By 2004, public use/outreach specialist will provide all school districts in the five-county Wetland Management District with a list of environmental education opportunities that are available at U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Offices in the District (Detroit Lakes Wetland Management District, Rydell National Wildlife Refuge, Hamden Slough National Wildlife Refuge, Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge, etc.).

*Strategy 6.8.4:* Construct an environmental education facility with an indoor/outdoor classroom to accommodate area students and educators.

## **Operations**

### Goal 7: Development Plan

Preparation of WPA Development Plans: Complete Geographic Information System (GIS) based WPA Development Plans for each unit in each District. Provide Districts with GIS to assist with acquisition, restoration, management and protection of public and private lands.

**Objective 7.1:** All existing WPAs will have development plans developed by 2005 if not already completed and all records will be entered into new GIS system..

*Strategy 7.1.1:* Ensure that all District WPA Development Plans and easement documentation are entered in the GIS computer system by 2004.

**Objective 7.2:** Ensure that newly acquired land receives timely, effective unit planning to meet trust responsibilities within 2 years of taking title of a parcel.

*Strategy 7.2.1:* Document annual funding needs to fully meet this and other objectives.

**Objective 7.3** Software Development. Develop and initiate use of a GIS customized for District management in all appropriate Minnesota field stations by 2003.

*Strategy 7.3.1:* Train existing staff in the use of GIS software. New employees, regardless of job series, will be GIS literate.

**Objective 7.4:** Data Entry. Complete entry of WPA and easement ownership boundaries by 2002. Enter habitat, facility, and management accomplishment layers for the District by 2003.

*Strategy 7.4.1:* Ensure that all District WPA and easement boundaries are digitized on GIS computer by 2002. Development plans and easement docu-

mentation will be entered in the GIS computer system by 2003. Update as management data becomes available.

**Objective 7.5:** Staffing. The District needs a computer administrator (data manager/GIS expert) working full-time.

*Strategy 7.5.1:* By 2004, hire a full-time computer specialist to maintain the computer systems at Detroit Lakes, Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge, Rydell National Wildlife Refuge, and Hamden Slough National Wildlife Refuge. The computer specialist would work out of the Detroit Lakes Wetland Management District office.

#### Goal 8: Support Staff, Facilities and Equipment

Provide necessary levels of maintenance, technician and administrative support staff to achieve other Wetland Management District goals: Provide all Districts with adequate and safe office, maintenance and equipment storage facilities. Acquire adequate equipment and vehicles to achieve other District goals. Maintain District equipment and vehicles at or above Service standards.

**Objective 8.1:** The staffing needs identified in the CCP are further identified in the District's Refuge Operational Needs (RONS) document.

*Strategy 8.1.1:* As projects in this Plan are realized, administrative/clerical positions to provide support for expanded programs will be necessary.

**Objective 8.2:** By 2002, identify all buildings that do not meet Service standards.

*Strategy 8.2.1:* Review current program needs for building and storage space and work with engineering on expansion of current facilities to accommodate staff and equipment.

*Strategy 8.2.2:* Expand current office facility to accommodate anticipated staff by 2003.

**Objective 8.3:** Replace or modify all buildings that do not meet Service standards or needs by 2010 through MMS projects.

*Strategy 8.3.1:* Replace siding and roofing on bunk house and storage garage. Utilize MMS funds provided for specific purposes.

**Objective 8.4:** Ensure that all District vehicles are replaced when their mileage reaches normal industry replacement standards (6 years or 60,000 miles).

*Strategy 8.4.1:* Ensure that MMS documents are updated annually to reflect current vehicle needs.

- Objective 8.5:** Ensure that the Wetland District has adequate radio and telephone communications to facilitate management efficiency and staff safety.
- Strategy 8.5.1:* By 2002, in compliance with FCC requirements, upgrade the radio base station and all mobile and portable radios needed for management and safety needs.
- Strategy 8.5.2:* By 2002, purchase enough cellular telephones to ensure that all District staff (including volunteers) can contact the District Headquarters in cases of emergency and to facilitate management activities.
- Objective 8.6:** Maintain a current inventory of all maintenance needs, updating it annually.
- Strategy 8.6.1:* Ensure that engineering and contracting are aware of all work areas requiring their assistance each year once budgets are announced. Ensure that the MMS list reflects all new needs on a monthly basis.
- Strategy 8.6.2:* Maintain currency of WPA development plans identifying management/maintenance needs including but not limited to tree removal, rock pile removal, building site clean-up, fence maintenance, etc.

#### Goal 9: Annual Capital Development Funds

Ensure that annual capital development funds are large enough to meet necessary development of new WPA land: Have adequate funds available each year to permit completion of maintenance needs for each Wetland Districts current land base of Waterfowl Production Areas.

- Objective 9.1:** Educate and provide adequate information to regional, Washington, departmental, and congressional staffs of need for capital improvement funding of an ongoing acquisition program.
- Strategy 9.1.1:* Identify all costs associated with adding new lands to the annual operating and maintenance budget for the District. Building removal, site clean up, well sealing, fence removal, rock piles, weed control, tree and brush removal, exotic species control, parking lot development, and upland and wetland restoration are but a few of the potential needs for a given site.

#### Goal 10: Consistency

Develop and apply consistent policies for habitat, public use, and resource protection and ensure frequent coordination among Districts, both in Minnesota and in neighboring states with WPAs (North and South Dakota, Iowa, and Wisconsin).

**Objective 10.1:** Biannual coordination meetings for the Districts will be held to discuss common issues and practices. The meetings will include all District Managers and District Supervisors.

*Strategy 10.1.1:* Host every sixth meeting.

**Objective 10.2:** Once a year a regional meeting will be held to compare notes with Wetland Managers in Region 6 and other Wetland Management Districts in Region 3 that are not included in this Comprehensive Conservation Plan.

*Strategy 10.2.1:* Participate in coordination of meeting as requested.

**Objective 10.3:** Develop priority actions to be implemented by the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program with the strategies to be developed in joint effort by all Districts by 2005 with the Regional Office taking the lead and responsibility for the documentation.